

Alton Corps announces 2017 Tree of Lights chair-couple

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ALTON - Salvation Army Advisory Council Chairman, Kevin Botterbush announced today that Mark & Mary Cousley would be this year's Tree Of Lights Chair-Couple.

Botterbush said, "This is a very exciting time for the Alton Corps and we are so pleased to have such strong community leaders heading up our Red Kettle efforts for 2017."

Botterbush added, “With all of the recent tragedies throughout the United States (and World), the need is as great as it ever has been and we are confident that the Cousley’s leadership will insure that the Alton Corps has the resources to continue to serve the Riverbend region to its fullest extent.”

Mark and Mary Cousley both come from families with a long history of community service, and are very proud to be continuing that tradition. Mark has served on the Salvation Army’s Advisory Council for three years and currently serves as the Advisory Board President of the Catholic Children’s Home in Alton. He was also Chair of the local Boy Scouts District Council, and officer of East End Improvement Association, St. Ambrose school board, and various community committees. He is the Vice President of Liberty Bank in Godfrey. Mary is a member of P.E.O., past member of Alton Children’s Theater, and served on the LCCC Collage and American Cancer Society Snow Ball Committees with Mark, and has been a part of many local church and community projects.

Mary taught kindergarten and 2nd grade at St. Ambrose Catholic School in Godfrey before staying home to raise their children. Their son Alex is a college freshman, and daughter Katie is a high school sophomore.

“As a member of the Advisory Council, I see first-hand the positive work the Alton Corps does throughout the local area,” said Mark. Mr. Cousley remarked, “During the busy Christmas season, we need to remember those in our community who are struggling.” He added, “Giving to the Salvation Army Red Kettles is giving to our fellow citizens...the money stays right here.”

Corps Officers, Stephen & Lily Reinier shared, “Being our first Christmas in Alton, we are very grateful to The Cousley’s for agreeing to be our first Tree Of Lights Chairs.” The Reinier’s added, “There are so many moving parts for a Corps during the Christmas Season, to have strong leadership in this position is a real answer to prayer.”

For Alton Corps Kettle Coordinator, Greg Gelzinnis, Kettle Season is really just around the corner and with the announcement of the Corp’s Tree Of Lights Chairs, the “green flag” for registration is now ready to drop. Gelzinnis remarked, “It will take over 1500 Volunteers to cover all of our time-slots and locations during the 4 weeks of our campaign which runs from Friday, November 24 through Saturday, December 23.” Gelzinnis added, “We have a new registration platform for this year and so all of our potential Bell Ringers are encouraged to follow this link <http://bttr.im/iw8tw>.” He emphasized, “If you do not have a computer or are having any difficulty getting

registered, do not hesitate to call me at 618-465-7764 X16 and I will be happy to help.” “The sites are all up and running, and for individuals or groups that have favorite days or locations to ring...now is the time to get registered.” remarked Gelzinnis.

The Red Kettle Campaign is the largest single fundraiser of the local Corps, as well as, for the Salvation Army globally. On the local level just during Christmas, 298 households (representing over 850 individuals) were served food, 456 children were given toys and over 158 Social Service volunteers donated over 872 hours of their time (not including our Bell Ringers) to make it happen.

The spirit and marching orders of this year’s campaign is really summed up in the words of Tree Of Lights Chair, Mary Cousley, “All families, and especially the kids, deserve to feel joy during the Christmas Season...and if we each just do what we can, then as a community we will make that possible for our “neighbors” who cannot do it on their own.”

The Alton Corp’s Tree Of Lights Ceremony will take place at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 21, at their Alby Street facility, and the community is invited and encouraged to attend. The 2017 Tree Of Lights Goal will be announced at that time.